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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of Success For All (SFA), a reading program for children in prekindergarten through sixth grade. The program emphasizes prevention and early intervention, rather than remediation, to help children realize their potential from the start. Program components include: one-on-one tutoring, assessments conducted every 8 weeks, initial and ongoing teacher training, half-day preschool and whole-day kindergarten, beginning reading instruction for 90 minutes each day, reading groups that are regrouped regularly according to reading level, cooperative learning, family support services, full-time facilitator who coordinates the program and provides training to administration and staff, and an advisory committee that reviews the program's progress. Extensive research has consistently shown that SFA has the most significant effect on students who are the most at risk (lowest 25%). As of Spring 1999, Success For All was in use in approximately 1,130 schools (urban, rural and suburban) in 360 districts in 44 states. It is also being used by schools in other countries. Sections of the paper discuss background, philosophy and goals, program components, evidence of effectiveness, professional development and support, implementation, costs, considerations, contact information, and policy issues and questions. (Contains 13 references.) (SR)

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Success for All

Background - Philosophy and Goals - Program Components - Evidence of Effectiveness
Professional Development and Support - Implementation - Costs - Considerations
Policy Issues and Questions - Resources

Topic or Category: Comprehensive School Reform, Reading
Grade Level: PreK-6
Target Population: General

OVERVIEW

Background and Scope:

Success for All (SFA) was designed primarily for use in Title I urban elementary schools serving at-risk students. It was piloted in one Baltimore elementary school in the 1987-88 school year. As of spring 1999, Success for All was in use in approximately 1,130 schools -- urban, rural and suburban -- in 360 districts in 44 states. It also is being used by schools in other countries, such as Canada, Mexico, Australia, Israel and England.

Philosophy and Goals:

The principle behind Success for All is that every child can, and must, read and therefore must succeed in the early grades regardless of his or her background. The program emphasizes prevention and early intervention, rather than remediation, to help children realize their potential from the start. The primary goals are to bring young students to grade level in reading and other basic skills and to keep them performing at grade level in the elementary years.

According to the program's developers, SFA's "greatest importance is in demonstrating that success for disadvantaged students can be routinely ensured in schools that are not exceptional or extraordinary (and were not producing great success before the program was introduced). We cannot ensure that every school has a charismatic principal or that every student has a charismatic teacher. Nevertheless, we can ensure that every child, regardless of family background, has an opportunity to succeed in school." (Slavin et al, 1996)

Program Components:

Components of Success For All include the following:
One-on-one tutoring
Assessments conducted every eight weeks
Initial and ongoing teacher training
Half-day preschool and whole-day kindergarten
Beginning reading instruction for 90 minutes each day
Reading groups that are regrouped regularly according to reading level
Cooperative learning
Family support services
Full-time facilitator who coordinates the program and provides training to administration and staff
Advisory committee that reviews the program's progress.

Evidence of Effectiveness:

Success for All has been extensively evaluated over the life of the program. Research consistently has

shown that SFA has the most significant effect on students who are the most at risk (lowest 25%). The brief analyses of research presented here are only examples of available research on the program. See the resource list below for additional studies and analyses.

1. Briggs and Clark conducted an analysis of the available studies on SFA in 1997. Their findings were:
In most of the 23 schools and nine districts in which studies compared SFA and control students, SFA students scored significantly higher on reading tests than students in control groups. On average, SFA 1st graders were three months ahead of students in control groups. By the time they reached 5th grade, SFA students were more than a full grade ahead of control students.
The original Baltimore SFA schools showed substantial reductions in retention rates. Schools that had more resources for implementing SFA were more successful in reducing retention than schools with fewer resources. Among five SFA schools, retention rates ranged from 0 to 1.9%. Previously, these schools had retention rates of 6.7 to 10.7%.
Several districts experienced a 50% reduction in special education placements for learning disabilities. In the Baltimore SFA schools, 2.2% of 3rd graders were referred to special education, compared to 8.8% of 3rd graders in control groups. Reading scores for SFA special education students were substantially higher than control students, as well.

2. A study conducted by Smith et al in 1996 evaluated SFA's effects on students' reading achievement in four cities. This independent study measured student achievement using matched groups of students in grades K-2. The sites included one school in Tennessee, two schools in Indiana, four schools in Alabama and two schools in Idaho. The Tennessee school implemented SFA for three years (1990-1993), while the other schools implemented the program for two years (1991-1993). Nationally standardized reading test batteries (Woodcock Reading Mastery Test and Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty) were used to measure achievement.

The findings were as follows:
In three of the four sites, SFA students showed greater achievement than students in the control groups at the four sites.
Achievement was most marked for students who ranked below the 25th percentile.
According to the evaluators, however, "SFA effects were not as strong and consistent as those obtained in the original studies. This research suggests that SFA can be implemented in sites geographically removed from the developers and apart from their direct supervision, but that continual monitoring and support of the program's quality is needed to ensure success over time" (p. 1).

3. In 1996, Slavin et al evaluated the outcomes of 23 SFA schools in nine districts in eight states. Their findings were as follows:
SFA students showed significantly greater gains in achievement over matched control students in all districts.
The program had the highest impact on:
-- The achievement of English as a Second Language (ESL) and special education students
-- Reducing special education referrals.
Effect sizes increased with the number of years of implementation (the longer children are in the program, the better they do). (See Figure 1 below.)

FIGURE 1: Effect Sizes Comparing Success for All and Control Schools According to Implementation Year (p. 69)

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4
GRADE 1	0.49	0.53	0.58	0.73
GRADE 2		0.41	0.47	0.87
GRADE 3			0.32	0.54

4. A 1997 study conducted by Jones, Gottfredson and Gottfredson evaluated SFA in the Charleston, South Carolina, school district. It is important to note that the district's implementation of SFA did not include the standard requirement that 80% of teachers vote by secret ballot to endorse participation in the program. In addition, the district did not adopt the family support component. As always, the model's effectiveness may vary with level of implementation.

The tests used to measure student achievement were the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, Metropolitan Readiness Test, Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests - Revised, the Merrill Language Screening Test, the Test of Language Development, the Basic Skills Assessment Program, the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) and the Durrell Test of Reading Difficulty.

The results of the study were mixed. According to the authors, "some of the effects were significant and positive, others were nonsignificant, and still others were significant and negative" (Jones, et al, 1997). Findings of the study included:
Large positive effects were found for SFA students in the kindergarten program. These positive effects, however, did not occur in the later grades. The effects in grades 1-3 were "generally inconsistent and small."
In the first group (cohort 1), for all years, only one measured effect size proved significant: Comparison students scored higher than the SFA participants on SAT reading in Year 1.
In the second group (cohort 2), in Year 1, SFA students scored higher than comparison school students on the Woodcock Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack scales, and the Metropolitan Auditory and Visual Matching scales. Comparison school students, however, scored higher than SFA students on Sentence Imitation. In the second year, SFA students scored higher than comparison school students on the Woodcock Word Attack.
In the third group (cohort 3), SFA students scored significantly higher in the second year than comparison school students on the Woodcock Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack scales, and the Metropolitan Visual Matching scales (p. 659).

Professional Development and Support:

Success for All requires three consecutive days of training for all teachers before the program begins. SFA trainers return to the school for three two-day visits during the first year to work with the principal, facilitators and teachers on implementation of the program. Four additional days focus on developing the family support and tutoring programs. Success for All trainers are available for telephone consultation during the year. Facilitators follow up on initial training with classroom visits, coaching and team meetings.

Implementation:

SFA encourages district and school staff to review program materials and videotapes, and visit SFA sites before making a decision about adopting the program. Once schools apply, SFA will provide information on program elements, ensure that schools have the resources to implement the program effectively and ensure that staff are committed to implement SFA.

The program requires 80% of school staff to support the program before it can be implemented (teachers vote by secret ballot). Districts must make a strong commitment to implement Success for All, including adequately staffing the program and providing necessary funding for training.

The program recommends that there be a full-time facilitator for successful implementation and support. This person provides support to teachers through visits to classrooms, coaching and frequent meetings. He or she also organizes and monitors data from eight-week assessments and serves as a liaison between all parties (teachers, administrators, tutors, family support staff and parents).

Costs:

According to Success for All, cost is based on the size and location of the individual school and the number of schools collaborating in training. Sample costs for a school of about 500 PreK-5th-grade

students range from $70,000 to $75,000 for Year 1; $26,000 to $30,000 for Year 2; and $20,000 to $23,000 for Year 3. (Add or subtract approximately $65 for each student over or under 500.) These estimates include training, materials and follow-up visits. Actual costs will depend in part on distance to training centers and specific school needs (such as bilingual or ESL training), and will be calculated for individual schools. Typically, the program is funded by reallocating a school's current Title I money, Obey-Porter comprehensive school reform funds, and/or other state and federal funds. Some schools receive special district or foundation grants during the first year of implementation. Success for All schools use existing personnel to staff the program, replacing existing roles with those of facilitator and tutors.

Considerations:

According to the Smith, Ross, Casey study (1996), a "full" model, which is the type used at the present sites, costs approximately $800-$1,200 per student. If a school does not receive Title I or other supplementary support, components such as tutors and a full-time facilitator would be costly for schools. The study's authors point out, however, that a school still could use the curriculum, regrouping and restricted tutoring/facilitator services.

As SFA "scales up" or expands, the developer's capacity to provide assistance to schools implementing the program will become more of a challenge.

Contact information:
Success for All
200 West Towsontown Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21204-5200
Phone: 800-548-4998
Fax: 410-324-4444
E-mail: sfa@successforall.net
http://www.successforall.net

Policy Issues and Questions:
How can states help districts and schools choose the most appropriate reading programs to improve students' skills and performance? What information would be useful?
Should states promote particular reading programs for districts and schools to use?
How can a reading program's track record be checked and validated?
What criteria should states and districts use to invest in various reading programs initially and for the long term?
How should policymakers weigh the benefits of a reading program and professional development so teachers are better equipped to help all students read successfully?

Resources:
American Institutes for Research (1999). *An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform.* Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

Briggs, K.L., and Clark, C. (1997). *Reading Programs for Students in the Lower Elementary Grades: What Does the Research Say?* Austin, TX: Texas Center for Educational Research. Retrieved on September 14, 1999 from the World Wide Web: **http://www.tasb.org/tcer/reading.html**

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